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PUBLIC OPINION  
of the  
**Civilian Conservation  
Corps**  
IN CALIFORNIA

*By*

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Chief of Public Relations, California Region  
Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture



*Published by*  
**CALIFORNIA REGION, U. S. FOREST SERVICE**  
S. B. Show, *Regional Forester*

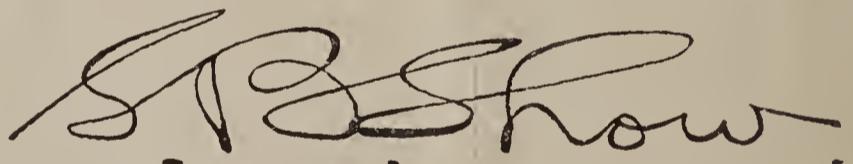
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## FOREWORD

Public opinion in California, judged by spoken comments and editorials in the press, has been generally favorable to the President's program of Emergency Conservation Work and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Such mediums of opinion, however, may not always express the views of individual citizens, organizations and communities. With this in mind, it seemed worth while to ascertain what representative persons in all parts of the State thought of this project. This we have done, and the facts herewith presented are the results.

From the analysis of letters received by the Forest Service it seems safe to say that public opinion, based on a knowledge of the Civilian Conservation Corps and its activities during the first year of its existence, is overwhelmingly in favor of this project and its continuance.



S. B. SHOW,

*Regional Forester, U. S. Forest Service;  
Regional Coordinator of Emergency  
Conservation Work in California.*

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# PUBLIC OPINION OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN CALIFORNIA

## INTRODUCTION

One of the best known and most popular of the many relief measures inaugurated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to combat unemployment and depression throughout the Nation is the program of Emergency Conservation Work, first put into effect on April 5, 1933, by the appointment of Robert Fechner as Director and the enrollment of youths, 18 to 25 years of age, for the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Emergency Conservation Work program had for its objectives:

1. Worth-while work for unemployed boys.
2. The building of health and morale.
3. The protection and development of forests and watersheds.

Under the administration and supervision of the Army and Federal and State forest and park officials all of these objectives were attained in California.

Because of favorable weather and work conditions throughout the year, the presence of large areas of Federal and State forests and parks, and the existence of detailed plans for forest protection and development prepared years in advance by forestry and park agencies, California was allotted 171 C. C. C. camps for the summer season (April to September 30, 1933), and 150 camps for the winter season (October 1, 1933, to March 31, 1934). This total of camps was far greater than that allotted to any other State.

Seventy-four per cent of the summer C. C. C. camps in California and 63 per cent of the winter camps were located in the eighteen National Forests of the State. The average personnel per camp for the season, including C.C.C. boys, Army officers and forestry technicians, was approximately 200. During the summer work period considerably more than 50 per cent of the C. C. C. boys in the California camps came from Eastern, Middle West and Southern States. Winter camps had 43 per cent of California boys.

The large number of C. C. C. camps established in the State, the many different levels of social life represented by the boys, and the extensive and varied character of the forestry work performed, made it possible for the citizens of California to visit many camps, get acquainted with the boys, and secure a comprehensive view of this unusual relief measure to the end that

they might form a just opinion of its true character and worth.

To aid the public in its knowledge of the objectives and accomplishments of the Emergency Conservation Work program, Regional Forester S. B. Show, Chief of the California Region, U. S. Forest Service, and coordinator of all National Forest and State C. C. C. Forestry activities in California, issued a series of official letters addressed to "key-men" in all parts of the State. In his letter of May 23, 1934 (see Appendix), which summarized the accomplishments of the C. C. C. in Forest Service and State Division of Forestry camps during the first year of its existence, Mr. Show requested an expression of opinion on: 1. "the value of the forestry and conservation work done and the justification for its maintenance," and 2. "whether you believe that the C. C. C., in a modified form, should be made a permanent institution." The following summary of public opinion on the Civilian Conservation Corps in California is based on a detailed analysis of the reports received to this letter.

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OPINION ON THE C. C. C.

A total of 4,000 "key-men" in California were addressed by Regional Forester Show in letter of May 23, 1934. Of this total, 450 (11%) replied expressing their personal views, or those of the organization which they represented, on the Civilian Conservation Corps and its accomplishments. The vocations, professions and organizations represented by these writers, the number of letters received from each class, and the number of writers having personal knowledge of the C. C. C. camps, boys and work projects, is given in the following table:

CLASS	PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE	
	LETTERS RECEIVED (NUMBER)	OF C. C. C. (NUMBER)
Agriculturists .....	27	7
American Legion officers.....	27	9
Bankers .....	13	7
Business men.....	79	32
Chambers of Commerce and Automobile Club officers.....	30	9
Educators and Clergymen.....	39	18
Livestock Association officers.....	3	1
Lumbermen .....	16	10
Newspaper editors .....	5	3
Public officials .....	65	33
Public utilities officers.....	32	13

Professional men .....	26	11
Resort owners and Sportsmen.....	29	13
Social organizations—officers .....	12	3
Miscellaneous citizens .....	47	17
	—	—
Total.....	450	186 or 41%

### Sentiment Toward the C. C. C. Program

Public opinion on the Civilian Conservation Corps and its work, as expressed by the "key-men," shows the following overwhelming majority in favor of the project:

SENTIMENT	NUMBER	PER CENT
Approval .....	431	95.78
Disapproval .....	4	.89
No expression .....	15	3.33
	—	—
	450	100.00

Fifty-five writers (12%) stated that the C. C. C. is the most successful of all the Administration relief measures. Many others gave high praise to the conduct and accomplishments of the program.

"No expression" was largely due to lack of knowledge of the C. C. C. on the part of the writer.

### Reasons for Approval of the C. C. C.

The principal reasons given for approval of the C. C. C. have been listed under six specific heads in the following table. Many writers mentioned more than one reason for their expression of sentiment, all of which were listed, thus making the total reasons nearly double the number of letters analyzed.

REASONS FOR APPROVAL	NUMBER
Forest benefits:	
Protection .....	188
Improvement .....	199
Rehabilitation of boys.....	194
Unemployment relief.....	68
Education and training.....	15
General benefits to boys and forests.....	169

The interesting points brought out by this table are: 1. That forest benefits, protection and improvement, are considered of equal value with the moral and spiritual rehabilitation of the boys. 2. That the unemployment relief

feature of the C. C. C. program is of less consideration, and 3. That education and training is given the least weight.

The "General benefits" classification in this and succeeding tables expresses, for the most part, the views of those who are not personally acquainted with the C. C. C. and its activities.

### **Sentiment for Continuance of the C. C. C.**

The sentiment for the continuance of the Civilian Conservation Corps in a modified form, as shown in the following table, while not quite as strong as that in favor of the project as a whole, nevertheless proves conclusively that a large majority believe that the C. C. C. program should not be abandoned at this time:

SENTIMENT	NUMBER	PER CENT
Approval .....	395	87.78
Disapproval .....	7	1.55
No expression .....	48	10.67
	450	100.00

Five writers approved continuance of the C. C. C. only during the period of the depression. Many others who favored continuance of the C. C. C. expressed concern over the cost of the program and its reflection in future taxation.

### **Reasons for Continuance of the C. C. C.**

The reasons given by the "key-men" in support of their approval for continuance of the C. C. C. are listed under seven heads in the following table. Here again the writers often gave more than one reason, which accounts for the total reasons exceeding the number of letters analyzed:

REASONS FOR CONTINUANCE	NUMBER
<b>Forest benefits:</b>	
Protection .....	98
Maintenance of improvements constructed by C.C.C. ....	142
Rehabilitation of boys.....	131
Unemployment relief.....	92
Economic benefits .....	20
Education and training.....	9
General benefits to boys and forests.....	156

This table, when compared with the one listing "Reasons for Approval of the C. C. C.," shows some interesting changes in the weight given the different items or reasons. The maintenance of extensive forest improvements

(firebreaks, truck trails, roads, bridges and like projects) constructed by the C. C. C., is given the greatest weight, followed, in order, by the moral and spiritual rehabilitation of the boys and protection of the forests. Unemployment relief received greater consideration by those favoring continuance of the C. C. C., and a new factor, "economic benefits," enters into the picture, but is not given the weight that one might expect.

### Criticism of the C. C. C.

Out of the total of 450 "key-men" letters analyzed, 38 writers (8.4%) voiced criticism of the Civilian Conservation Corps program and activities. Only 18 of these critics, however, had personal knowledge of the C. C. C., the others presenting hearsay opinions of their friends and associates. Many writers, who approved the C. C. C. program as a whole, offered constructive criticism based on their personal views of forestry and conservation, or reflecting popular opinion on local problems. A tabulation of all criticisms received, which is self-explanatory, follows:

#### Criticisms of the C. C. C.

##### GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Local workers not benefited by C. C. C.....	1
C. C. C. privileges not always given to needy boys.....	2
C. C. C. is a waste of time and labor.....	4
Too much money spent on C. C. C.....	1
More education should be given to boys.....	1
C. C. C. may be demoralizing to initiative.....	1
Discipline on work projects not strict enough.....	4
Discipline in and away from camp not strict enough.....	7
	<hr/>
	21

##### WORK AND WORK PROJECTS

Work of C. C. C. not of economic value.....	1
Road work program not always practical.....	4
More rodent control work needed.....	2
More insect control work needed.....	1
More planting of trees needed.....	1
Too much money spent on recreation improvements.....	1
C. C. C. not as efficient as regular workmen.....	1
Wild life threatened by road work in back country.....	6
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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

JULY 12, 1934.

## APPENDIX

### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE CALIFORNIA REGION

PR (ECW) Coop.

MAY 23, 1934.

MR. JOHN JONES,  
Sacramento, Calif.

DEAR MR. JONES:

President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps program completed its first year on April 1. As the initial rehabilitation measure of the administration, designed to place unemployed men at work on constructive forestry projects, it has been watched with keen interest by the public. Today, on the basis of accomplishments, it may be said to stand approved by almost unanimous public opinion.

In my previous letters I have endeavored to keep you informed of the progress of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the National Forests of California. Now I am able to present to you a more comprehensive picture of this unusual experiment.

Viewed on a nationwide basis, the Civilian Conservation Corps has proved a social and economic success. It has taken 600,000 young men from the ranks of the unemployed and put them on worth-while and necessary work in the forests. It has distributed \$77,000,000 to these boys and their needy parents, and helped in the revival of industry by the expenditure of \$145,000,000 for equipment and supplies. It has benefited the health and morale of these youths, trained them in vocations and aided in their education.

But the C. C. C. has done more than that. It has given the American people a new "social formula" under which to operate in its war against unemployment and depression. It has demonstrated that large numbers of unskilled men, capable only of doing every-day jobs with common tools and machinery, can be put to work at short notice on constructive forestry and conservation projects that are productive of lasting benefit not only to the men themselves, but to the economic life of the State and Nation. And it has

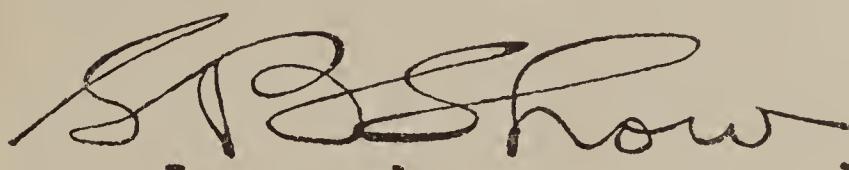
utilized these men without interfering with the demand for or the proper standards of normal employment.

The Civilian Conservation Corps is the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity that foresters have had in a generation. The Forest Service met this challenge through long-term plans, prepared years in advance, for the protection and development of the National Forests, and by requiring the maximum of accomplishments in the woods consistent with the capabilities of the C. C. C. This was particularly true in California, where many more camps were located than in any other State, and the attached summary of the highlights of work done during the first year of the C. C. C. tells its own story.

Today Federal and State forestry agencies are faced with a new and pressing problem that will require the sympathetic understanding and help of all citizens. This is the problem of maintenance of the physical improvements, such as fire breaks, roads and trails, telephone lines, lookout towers, ranger stations, and public camp grounds, constructed in the forests under the various emergency programs. Because of the large sums of public money made available, the rate of progress in this work in the National Forests of California has been vastly greater than in normal years. But no provision has been made in the regular Government appropriation bills for the maintenance of the physical improvement thus built. If such provision is not made in the near future there is serious danger that much of the gain made will be lost.

Your interest in the Civilian Conservation Corps and knowledge of its accomplishments leads me to request from you an expression of your personal opinion as to the value of the forestry and conservation work done and the justification for its maintenance; also, whether you believe that the C. C. C., in a modified form, should be made a permanent institution. If you will be good enough to give me your ideas on these problems it will be most helpful to me as coordinator of C. C. C. forestry activities in California.

Very sincerely yours,



S. B. SHOW,

*Regional Forester and*

*Regional Coordinator ECW Work.*

Enclosure.

# MAJOR WORK ACCOMPLISHED BY CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN CALIFORNIA\*

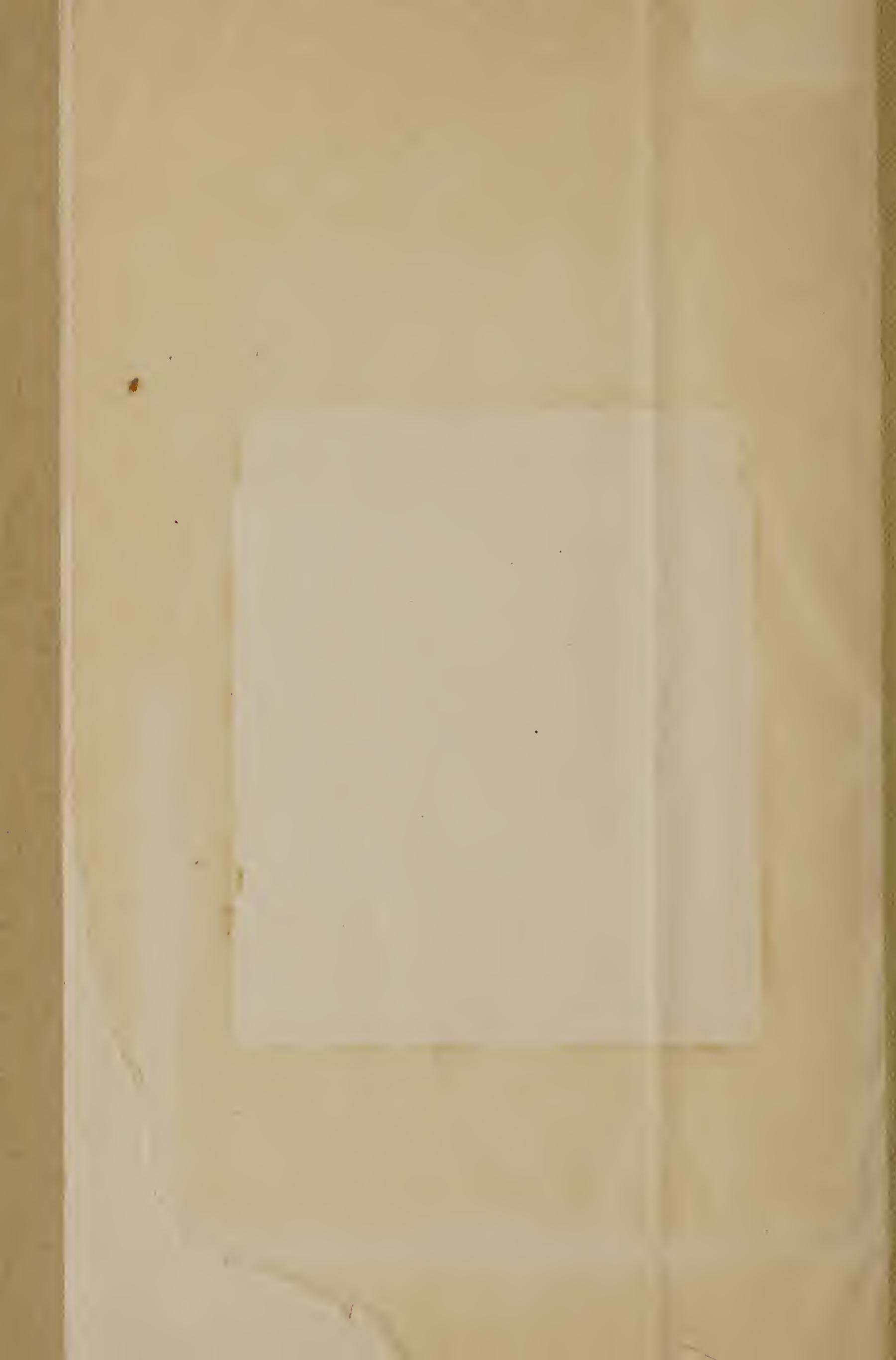
To March 31, 1934—Completion of First Year of  
Emergency Conservation Work

U. S. Forest Service and State Division of Forestry Camps Only

	NEW CONSTRUCTION	MAINTENANCE WORK
Fire breaks .....	923 Mi.	253 Mi.
Truck trails .....	2,225 Mi.	1,546 Mi.
Telephone lines .....	1,332 Mi.	1,666 Mi.
Fire hazard reduction:		
Clearing along roads and trails.....	2,173 Mi.	135 Mi.
Fireproofing forest land.....	37,124 Acres	
Horse and foot trails.....	321 Mi.	319 Mi.
Public camp grounds cleared.....	1,262 Acres	193 Acres
Insect pest control.....	17,105 Acres (Pine bark beetle)	
Rodent control .....	720,091 Acres	
Planting .....	2,120 Acres	
Tree and disease control.....	22,238 Acres	
Topographic surveys .....	103,720 Acres	
Erosion control .....	6,940 Acres	
Bridges built .....	414	
Ranger and guard stations built.....	130	40
Airplane landing fields.....	104 Acres cleared	
Searching for missing people.....	904 Man-days	
Fighting forest fires.....	113,084 Man-days	

\*The C. C. C. in California worked on more than 60 different classes of forestry and conservation projects.





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